

RUSSIA AND THE WEST IN **IRAN**

faced a most difficult position. They ardently desired to avoid any complications with the Russians that would vitiate the grand alliance and yet they wanted to prevent the Russian bear from eating the Persian lamb. Another handicap was the ownership of South Iranian oilfields. It made them vulnerable to the accusation of economic imperialism and labor exploitation. Again any counter-arguments were bound to be of defensive nature.

Furthermore, something in the British psychological make-up, partly inherited and partly resulting from colonial experience, prevents the British from mingling freely and fraternizing on an equal footing with Asiatics. An Englishman, whether in Egypt, India, or Iran, usually appears to the native as somewhat aloof, even if he takes pains to be courteous and friendly. This aloofness may perhaps increase his prestige with the average Iranian, but at the same time it prevents him from establishing a real communion. The net result is that the British may be respected, admired, and sometimes feared, but they are seldom loved and frequently disliked. In all fairness it should be said that heroic attempts were made by some members of the P.R.B.'s staff to remedy this situation. But these were exceptions.

Working under these handicaps, the British found it imperative to conduct a consistent, well-conceived policy and to avoid costly mistakes. Unfortunately, this was not achieved. Serious blunders erased many hard-earned gains. These mistakes, however, can hardly be ascribed to the British Embassy in Iran. They were rather the result of general attitudes prevailing in London. The first mistake was trying to convince the Iranians that perfect unity of

purpose and ac-
 tion existed among the Allies, in particular between
 Russia and the
 West. The second was that the main if not the only
 war aim was to
 defeat Germany, Such propaganda did not appeal to
 the Iranians,
 and, with reference to the defense of the British
 position against Soviet
 action, it was definitely harmful. The politically
 conscious Iranians
 realized perfectly well that no real unity of purpose
 and action
 existed between Russia and the Western democracies.
 Long years of
 proximity to the Soviet Union and the British Empire
 had had its ef-
 fect upon their minds and made them disillusioned
 and realistic. The
 British pretense, nay, almost maniacal insistence, that
 nothing divided